



Early Journal Content on JSTOR, Free to Anyone in the World

This article is one of nearly 500,000 scholarly works digitized and made freely available to everyone in the world by JSTOR.

Known as the Early Journal Content, this set of works include research articles, news, letters, and other writings published in more than 200 of the oldest leading academic journals. The works date from the mid-seventeenth to the early twentieth centuries.

We encourage people to read and share the Early Journal Content openly and to tell others that this resource exists. People may post this content online or redistribute in any way for non-commercial purposes.

Read more about Early Journal Content at <http://about.jstor.org/participate-jstor/individuals/early-journal-content>.

JSTOR is a digital library of academic journals, books, and primary source objects. JSTOR helps people discover, use, and build upon a wide range of content through a powerful research and teaching platform, and preserves this content for future generations. JSTOR is part of ITHAKA, a not-for-profit organization that also includes Ithaka S+R and Portico. For more information about JSTOR, please contact support@jstor.org.

THE MEANING OF SONG.

"A SONG" has long stood in our speech as the synonym for utter worthlessness, and in our thought as the synonym for priceless values; so that we sell for a song the toy for which there is no competition, and we buy in a song the joy for which there is no equivalent. The proverbial use of "song" as an expression of contempt has probably come down to us from the days when the writers of popular songs were ashamed to put their names to verses that catered to a depraved public sentiment. But the author of the music had no such reason to hide his personality; and so it comes about that an old song often brings down the name of its composer, but no hint of the original hand, nor of the many succeeding hands, that have made or molded the words to suit the requirements of different generations. Even down to the revival of song begun by Robert Burns, the words of a ballad were too often anybody's or nobody's, and thus the ballad itself came to represent the price of an article which was too trifling to be claimed.

Does the power of a song lie in the melody, in the association, or in the words? Sir Thomas Browne says there is music wherever there is harmony, and of the movements of the spheres, that "though they give no sound to the ear, yet to the understanding they strike a note most full of harmony." George Henry Lewes says: "The primary requisite of music is, not that it shall present grand thoughts, but that it shall agitate the soul with musical emotions." Lady Eastlake says: "Pictures, poetry, thoughts, hatreds, loves, are all more fleeting than tunes." Even to the effect of tunes played on a hand-organ we have some wonderful testimony. Leigh Hunt says the hand-organ which "brings unexpected music to the ear," affected him like the sight of a tree in the streets of London. Byron breaks off suddenly in the midst of one of the dreariest entries in his Ravenna diary to say: "Oh! there is an organ playing in the street—a waltz, too! I

must leave off to listen. They are playing a waltz which I have heard ten thousand times at the balls in London, between 1812 and 1815. Music is a strange thing." Herbert Spencer says: "An air from a street piano, heard when one is at work, will often gratify more than the choicest music played at a concert by the most accomplished musician."

All the "musical emotions" here referred to were made upon highly organized beings by the lowest form of music, and instances could be multiplied endlessly in which the deepest effect is produced by the simplest strains. Byron, in another page of his diary, says: "Music—Tyrolese air with variations. Sustained the cause of the original simple air against the variations of the Italian school." Sir Walter Scott says: "The effect of simple, even rude, music is such as cannot be attained by the most learned compositions of the finest masters." Lamb, Goldsmith, and Washington Irving have all left their tribute to the power of simple songs. Hawthorne says of a cathedral organ heard in the distance: "It thrills through my heart-strings with a pleasure both of the sense and spirit. Heaven be praised, I know nothing of music as a science; and the most elaborate harmonies, if they please me, please as simply as a nurse's lullaby." Professor Kneeland said of the music heard in Iceland at the millennial celebration: "I understood hardly anything of the hymns sung, and yet I do not remember of ever having been so affected by music; sweet, solemn, and slightly plaintive, the chorus of 'Iceland's Thousand Years,' words and music of Icelandic origin, brought tears into most eyes, and I am sure it did into mine." Burns says: "Because I am cheaply pleased, is it any reason why I should deny myself the pleasure? Many of our strathspeys give me most exquisite enjoyment." So melody alone, and that of the simplest sort, can produce the most delightful musical effects.

Coleridge attributes the power of song to association:

"Every human feeling is greater and larger than the exciting cause,—a proof, I think, that man is designed for a higher state of existence; and this is deeply implied in music, in which there is always something more and beyond the immediate expression."

Dr. Channing, in a letter to Joseph Blanco White, says:

"I am no musician, and want a good ear, and yet I am conscious of a power in music which I want words to describe. It touches chords, reaches

depths in my soul which lie beyond all other influences,— it extends my consciousness. . . . Nothing in my experience is more mysterious, more inexplicable. An instinct has always led men to transfer it to heaven, and I suspect the Christian, under its power, has often attained to a singular consciousness of his immortality."

"Poetry and music came down from heaven, and will be found there again," says D'Aubigné. No saying of Carlyle's is more familiar than the following, on the same theme: "The meaning of song goes deep. Who is there that, in logical words, can express the effect music has on us? a kind of inarticulate, unfathomable speech which leads us to the edge of the Infinite, and lets us for moments gaze into that." In connection with the association power of music I recall Wordsworth's lines on hearing in the Alps the "Ranz des Vaches," that air which is said to possess a charm for Swiss ears only.

"I listen, but no faculty of mine
 Avails those modulations to detect,
 Which, heard in foreign lands, the Swiss affect
 With tenderest passion; leaving him to pine
 (So fame reports) and die,—his sweet-breathed kine
 Remembering, the green Alpine pastures decked
 With vernal flowers. Yet may we not reject
 The tale as fabulous."

The same power of association is attributed to the Scottish air of "Lochaber No More," which the Highland regimental bands are forbidden to play in foreign lands; but the air itself is touching to the susceptible of any clime or country. Byron's reference to it will be recalled:

"The home,
 Heart ballads of Green Erin or Gray Highlands,
 That bring Lochaber back to eyes that roam
 O'er far Atlantic continents or islands,
 The calentures of music which o'ercome
 All mountaineers with dreams that they are nigh lands
 No more to be beheld but in such visions."

Association, then, can give to songs the power of producing their most thrilling effects aside from the intrinsic beauty of the melody. Still another distinct capacity of calling up these subtle feelings is believed to lie in the words. If these are melodious,

inspiring, poetical, they should awaken the same emotions that are stirred by melody or association. Dibdin says:

“Those who get at the force and meaning of the words, and pronounce them as they sing, with the same sensibility and expression as it would require in speaking, possess an accomplishment beyond what all the art in the world can convey.”

We have but to recall the additional pleasure with which we listen to a song thus sung, in order to believe that an immortal song may owe its life to the poet and not to the musician, or to that magician, Association. Thus it would seem that the power of a song lies in the melody or harmony of tone, in the association, in the beauty of the words. Any of these singly can make a pleasing effect; all of them combined produce that which has moved the heart for ages.

A fine illustration of the immortality of an air in spite of words which are not only poor as poetry, but go as far as words can in destroying the charm of association, is seen in the British national anthem, “God Save the King.” The singular irrelevancy of the words will best be understood by a glance at their history. They are generally supposed to have been written by Henry Carey, author of “Sally in our Alley,” for James II., the exiled monarch; to have been revived during the rebellions of 1715 and 1745, and then silenced by the failure of the Jacobites; and to have re-appeared with the reading, “God Save Great George, our King,” but with the references to former reigns unchanged. In no other way could a meaning be found, in the quiet and undisputed accession of George, for the lines

“*Send him victorious,
Long to reign over us.*”
“*O Lord, our God, arise,
Scatter his enemies,
And make them fall.
Confound their politics,
Frustrate their knavish tricks.*”

But that explanation does not account for the last lines above given. They probably refer to the Gunpowder Plot; one strong proof of which is, that part of the language is identical with that introduced into a special prayer, ordered by the church to be offered for the king, after the discovery of that plot. The

song has been attributed to Ben Jonson, and, I think, correctly. He was Poet Laureate during the reign of James I., and as such would be called upon to eulogize his liege in verse. Soon after the discovery of the Gunpowder Plot, the Honorable Merchant Tailors' Company of London had a memorable meeting, at which a "great chorus of gentlemen and children of the royal chapel" sang. It is known that the music, written by the famous Dr. Bull, was produced on that occasion. To him the air of "God Save the King" is always attributed. The hall of the Merchant Tailors was soon afterward burned with all its contents, but the song was in the memory of the singers. Ben Jonson, being a true poet, would be glad to have such forced and doggerel verse destroyed. Carey lived during the reigns of Charles II., James II., William and Mary, Anne, and two of the Georges. He was a song-writer and a man of brilliant wit, but a satellite of nobility. He could easily have taken the floating fragment and trimmed its sails to catch the passing breath of royal favor. And so it grew, and has come down to us "with all its imperfections on its head," the poorest English national song, set to the finest melody.

Another instance of the remarkable immortality of an air, totally dis severed from sense or beauty of sentiment in the words, is our own saucy, world-defying quickstep, "Yankee Doodle." The words, absurd as they are, illustrate the fact that there may be deep meaning in the apparently aimless journeying of a song, and more popular knowledge of its history would add greatly to the association-charm of what we have always been half ashamed to call our national melody. I give the story as I have searched it out, the more readily because I have lately seen paragraphs relating to it that betoken both interest and ignorance. "Yankee Doodle" has been a true melody of the people in many lands. From the vineyards of France, from different provinces of the free Pyrenees, from the dykes of Holland, and from the Puritan struggles of England, the air comes down to us. In Holland the laborers received as their wages "a tenth of the harvest and as much buttermilk as they could drink." As they reaped they sang:

"Yankee dudel, doodle down,
Diddle, dudel, lanther,
Yankee viver, vover vown,
Buttermilk and tanther."

In England, in the reign of Charles I., the air was sung to a rhyme which is still heard in our nurseries :

“Lucy Locket lost her pocket,
Kitty Fisher found it;
Nothing in it, nothing on it,
But the binding round it.”

When Cromwell rode into Oxford upon a small horse, with his single plume fastened into a kind of knot, the whole outfit intended to suggest Puritan horror of high-stepping steeds and waving plumage, some waggish cavalier invented the following rhyme, and set it afloat to the homely melody of labor :

“Yankee Doodle came to town,
Upon a Kentish pony;
He stuck a feather in his cap,
Upon a macaroni.”

A “macaroni” was a small rosette, in shape and size like an Italian macaroon, called so from a blunder of the English in confusing the names of two Italian dishes so similar in pronunciation and spelling. The tune first came to this country in 1755. Braddock was assembling our forefathers near Albany, for an attack on the French and Indians at Forts Niagara and Frontenac. As the Continental recruits came in wearing all the fashions that had been seen in England for a hundred years, and bearing every weapon but those familiar to the fresh, well-drilled British troops, the old picture of Cromwell on the Kentish pony rose before the mind of another waggish cavalier. Dr. Richard Shuckburg, regimental surgeon, was a wit and a musician. Planning a joke for the amusement of the camp, he wrote out the score of “Yankee Doodle,” and gave it to the leader of the Continental band as the latest martial music. It was easily caught and enthusiastically played, amid shouts of laughter in the English ranks. Twenty-five years later there was less mirth in the British army when, with Lord Cornwallis at its head, it surrendered to Continentals whose band was playing “Yankee Doodle.” It was happy augury that so linked the Puritans of the Old World and the New—Cromwell and Washington, both marching to victory over despotism to the music of labor and freedom set for them in derision by their foes.

Another song, associated with a still more intense national struggle, shows in a wonderful manner how melodies come

with the need for them. The marching song of the war for the Union no more sprang from the ground than did the affliction that called it forth. I refer to the song called "John Brown's Body." Many were shocked to hear the almost sacred utterance "Glory, Hallelujah!" resounding through the North to the echo of armed tread, or the strains of martial music. But it would not cease. The refrain, as well as the lugubrious words,

"John Brown's body lies a-moldering in the grave;
His soul is marching on,"

suitied exactly the underlying politico-religious enthusiasm of that war. The fact is therefore not so strange as it is striking, that the air sprang to being almost at the same time from Charleston, South Carolina, and Charlestown, Massachusetts. In 1859 it was brought North by a gentleman who heard it as a hymn in a colored Presbyterian church in Charleston. About the same time the organist of the Harvard church in Charlestown found it among the musical archives of that church, and fitted to it the first stanza of the present song. The Glee-Club of the Boston Light Infantry took it up in 1861, and asked Mr. Charles Hall to write additional stanzas, which he did. The melody of the John Brown song will probably never die, but whether the words will be sung again is doubtful. They were weird, and solemn, and sad. They seemed at once like the funeral-note of slavery and the pean of triumph in the cause for which John Brown had died. They were sung by Northern and Southern soldiers together many a time, as if in unconscious prophecy of an event in which they should both rejoice. Soon after the burial of the poet of liberty, Béranger (1857), there appeared in the "Paris Charivari" a set of verses with the same general import or burden as the John Brown song. I quote from memory some lines of a translation :

"Bury Béranger! well for you,
Could you bury the soul of Béranger, too.
Bury the body of Béranger,
Bury the printer's boy, you may,
But the soul that wrought in that printer's boy
You can neither bury nor destroy!"

The two lyrics may have no other connection than that formed by the coincidence of sentiment due to similarity of fact.

There is another American song which, although it is famous only in memory, was a growth of occasion, and was dependent on its air for popularity, and therefore claims a place in a discussion of the *raison d'être* of songs. "Tippecanoe and Tyler, too," was to the political canvass of 1840 what the Marseillaise was to the French Revolution. It sang Harrison into the Presidency. Through this half-martial, half-rollicking melody the pent-up feelings of a people whose banks were suspended, whose laborers were out of work, who were pinched by hard times, and to whom the Whigs promised "two dollars a day and roast beef," had found expression, and the song was sung throughout the country as if by madmen. It has been attributed to John Greiner, the Ohio politician and editor, who, in that song-singing campaign, wrote "The Wagoner Boy," and "Zip Coon"; but the credit belongs to the late A. C. Ross, of Zanesville, in the same State. Mr. Ross was member of a political glee-club and of a church choir. "Martin's Lament," "Hard Times," and many other songs had been made, but none answered the popular demand, when a friend suggested to Ross that the air of "Little Pigs" would furnish a chorus if suitable words could be written. Mr. Ross went to church with his brain full of the suggestion. He sang gravely through voluntary and opening hymns, and then settled himself to his task. By the time the minister had reached "lastly," "Tippecanoe and Tyler, too," had been set dancing to the tune of "Little Pigs." One line, and that an important one in the refrain, baffled him. On Saturday night he was obliged to tell the club that he had a song — all but one line. "What is that?" said some one. "Van, Van, you're a nice little man," said Ross. Make it "Van, Van's a used-up man," cried his friend — and so it was, and he was, and that epithet had much to do with his using up. Mr. Ross came to New York to buy goods, and attended a political meeting in Lafayette Hall. Charles Delavan was presiding. Prentiss of Mississippi, Tallmadge of New York, and Otis of Boston, were to speak. Songs had been exhausted, and the vast audience was becoming restless, for still the speakers did not come. Delavan called for volunteer songs, when Ross arose near the door, and said that if he could reach the stage he would give one. "Pass him along!" and he was passed along over the heads of the dense mass until he stood upon the platform. "Who are you?" demanded the crowd. "A Buckeye, from the Buckeye State,"

said Ross. When three cheers for the Buckeye State had subsided, Ross requested the company to be quiet until he had sung three stanzas, and then join in if they liked. By the time the third chorus was reached, the whole audience struck in with indescribable effect.

Two classes of songs show in a remarkable degree the fact that the human voice in harmonious utterance needs neither association nor perfection of language to give it force. They are sea songs and negro songs. The conventional and traditional songs that are classed under these heads are not in the least like those really sung. Dibdin and many other writers of the island that "rules the wave" have written songs which are perfect as landsmen's songs for sailors; but no sailor would dream of singing them. The music actually used is more like snatches of chants, with absurd and picturesque and sounding words; just the burden of a song which they can lift together as they pull the heavy rope in concert. I well remember the chorus, as solemn as the sea, and as inspiring, that I once heard, when, in a storm, the sailors were reefing sail at midnight. I strained my ears to catch the words, and during a lull they came, clear and distinct, a volume of sound like a flood:

"O, O, roll a man down!"

If they had been committing a human being to the watery gulf, the sound could not have seemed more impressive. There is a fine instance of a landsman's sailor-song, made popular in this country by the singing of Incledon, the English tenor, which Clark Russell, the writer of sea stories (a son of Henry Russell, the vocalist) uses to illustrate the point I am speaking of. The song is called "The Storm," and in our anthologies is generally attributed to William Falconer, although there seems to be no reason to doubt that it was really written by George Alexander Stevens. Russell puts a stanza into the mouth of an old tar, with the following comment and dialogue:

"Now it freshens, set the braces;
Quick the topsail-sheets let go!
Luff, boys, luff! don't make wry faces!
Up the topsails nimbly clew!"

" 'Set the braces;' how's that job done, d'ye know? And when they was told to 'luff, boys, luff,' did they let go of the

VOL. CXXXVIII.—NO. 330.

34

wheel to 'up their topsails nimbly clew?' It must have been a bad storm, that. I wonder they didn't ship a capstan-bar in a lee scupper-hole, to keep the ship upright!" "You mustn't be too critical," said I. "It's the music of those old songs that makes them beautiful." "I've got nothen to do with the music," he said, warmly. "It's the words I'm lookin' at. What's the music got to do with the sense?" The "roll-a-man-down" chorus makes no nautical blunders.

The same is true of the singing of Southern negroes; they have never, in their own habitat, sung what we know as negro melodies. Their music seems to consist principally in a few weird and mournful cadences with grotesque, generally religious, words. The picturesque songs of the Hampton students and others gave us an understanding of this, but there is an untranslatable music which I have heard from both plantation and house servants that is still different; a kind of guttural wail that was deeply touching. I remember seeing in print one that resembles those I have heard:

"King Death he was a little king,
And he go from do' to do';
He kill some soul, and he wounded some,
And he lef' some soul to pray."

Of the songs thus far discussed, the words of the first two are positively without merit; those of the next two have only such value as arises from fitness, while at the height of their popularity they had no charm of association; and the remaining songs are certainly not dependent upon language. But "God Save the King" is a notable melody, worthy of the dignity it was meant to uphold and honor. "Yankee Doodle" is an earnest and inspiring measure, fitted to time the scythe-sweep of the mowers in a grain-field, or the reapers who "descend to the harvest of death." The air of "John Brown" is fitted to the words, which are an epitome of intense feeling and purpose; while the rat-tat-too of "Tippecanoe and Tyler, too," was well suited to drum out a rival candidate. Not one of the songs quoted as successfully sung contains a line of poetry, or had the charm of association.

Two of the most notable instances of world-famous songs founded almost wholly upon the charm of association, are "Home, Sweet Home" and "Auld Lang Syne." The air of

"Home, Sweet Home" is pretty, it is true, but slight and meaningless. The way in which pa-al-a-ces has to be jolted into the first line, is only one instance of many, while the repetition of "ho-o-me, sweet, sweet home," would be jarring indeed, if home were not so sweet as to make us forget it. Let the modern New Yorker try to sing a version like the following:

"F-lat, fl-a-t, sweet, sweet flat,
Be it only f-o-u-r s-t-o-ries, there's no place like that,"

and see what he thinks of the melody. The words, I fancy, would not for a moment be defended as poetry; but let the girl afflicted with nostalgia hum the song to herself, or the man who has been forced to be a wanderer from boyhood hear its strains in a foreign land, and Shakspeare's words to Mozart's music could sound no more enchanting. It was the sentiment that caused a sale of one hundred thousand copies in a single year. The story of Payne and of the song are so fresh in the minds of all, that no weight would be added to the argument by rehearsing them. Of "Auld Lang Syne," Burns himself says: "The air is but mediocre; but the old song of the olden time, which has never been in print, nor even in manuscript, until I took it down from an old man's singing, is enough to recommend any air." We all sing about "right gude willy-waughts" and "pint-stoups," just as if we knew what they meant. We do not care what they mean, nor whether the melody is more than mediocre. We know that they express the pathos of this life of ours—of the loves of youth, and the more sacred friendships of older days, the memories of our playtimes and our partings, our trysting and our troth. Byron puts the thought in better words:

"As Auld Lang Syne brings Scotland, one and all,
Scotch plaids, Scotch snoods, the blue hills and clear streams,
The Dee, the Don, Balgounie's brig's black wall,
All my boy feelings, all my gentler dreams
Of what I *then dreamt*, clothed in their own pall,
Like Banquo's offspring;—floating past me seems
My childhood in this childishness of mine;—
I care not—'tis a glimpse of 'Auld Lang Syne.'"

There is a thrice familiar and yet half-forgotten song which illustrates in an odd way the power of association against that of language, if not of melody. It is "When Shall We Three

Meet Again?" It is known that Samuel Webbe, a celebrated composer, born in London in 1740, wrote the music; but the words have been claimed for our country through two college traditions. One attributes them to a member of the first company of young men who devoted themselves to foreign missions, and so links them with the famous hay-stack of Williams College. Another speaks of them confidently as the work of an Indian, an early graduate of Dartmouth. In proof of the latter theory the following stanza is quoted :

"When around this youthful pine
Moss shall creep and ivy twine;
When these burnished locks are gray,
Thinned by many a toil-spent day,
May this long-loved bower remain,
Here may we three meet again."

The apparent allusion to the old pine at Dartmouth, and the word "burnished," so descriptive of an Indian's hair, constitute an argument. An old resident of New Hampshire told me that his sister and he learned the song from hearing it sung in his mother's house by an Indian graduate of the class of 1840. In an old English collection the lyric appears without the quoted stanza. It is there attributed to "a lady." I judge it to be English, perhaps written by the wife of a missionary. It was so appropriately sung by the first foreign missionaries in this country that it might easily be attributed to one of them. That was about 1810, when Dartmouth College was still known as Moor's Indian School. An Indian graduate, I conjecture, wrote for the graduating exercises, perhaps the tree-planting of his class, the stanza given above, which, although good for an Indian, is as much out of place in the lyric as a bit of wampum would be in a pearl necklace. I like to recall the beautiful original verses without the poor stanza :

"When shall we three meet again ?
When shall we three meet again ?
Oft shall glowing hope expire,
Oft shall wearied love retire,
Oft shall death and sorrow reign,
Ere we three shall meet again.

“ Though in distant lands we sigh,
 Parched beneath the burning sky ;
 Though the deep between us rolls,
 Friendship shall unite our souls ;
 Still in fancy’s rich domain
 Oft shall we three meet again.

“ When the dreams of life are fled,
 When its wasted lamp is dead ;
 When in cold oblivion’s shade
 Beauty, wealth, and power are laid,
 Where immortal spirits reign,
 There shall we three meet again.”

If words could keep a song upon the lip, would not this one be often heard? If association were not as powerful as melody, would not the Indian stanza have been rejected?

The next topic should be the immortal songs which have lived solely on account of the beauty of their words. It will be as short as the famous chapter on Norway snakes. “There are no snakes in Norway,” and there are no such songs. There ought to be, but there are not. It is true that Tennyson’s “Break, Break, Break” and “Too Late,” and Kingsley’s “Mary, go and Call the Cattle Home” and “Three Fishers,” as well as many other beautiful poems, are sung; but in each case the air is worthy of the words. Where are those in which our mothers delighted, Monckton Milnes’s “I Wandered by the Brookside,” Spencer’s “Too Late I Stayed,” Scott’s “The Heath this Night,” Wolfe’s “Go, Forget Me”? Why should “Comin’ Thro’ the Rye” and “Within a Mile of Edinboro’ Town” be sung, while Burns’s “Ae Fond Kiss,” and Alexander Wilson’s “Connel and Flora,” are never heard? Alas! there is a wide sense in which song and poetry, often used as synonymous terms, are entirely distinct.

But if it is true that we can point to few songs in which poetical expression, independent of melody or association, has been the secret of power, it is also true that beauty and depth of language and of thought are necessary to the highest effect even of a popular song. The verses which Tom Moore wrote for “Irish Melodies,” and those which Robert Burns wrote for “Scottish Airs,” prove this. Moore’s “Oft in the Stilly Night” has been parodied so often that absurd images rise to memory almost unconsciously; but the lyric has triumphed over them, and remains

a perfect song, perfect in its melody, perfect in its association, perfect as poetry. Burns's "Scots wha hae wi' Wallace Bled," I should instance as another perfect song. Burns showed it to the singer Albani, who said: "Now write soft words for that air." Burns never did so; but another Scottish song-writer was inspired to do it, and so produced another perfect song, for "The Land o' the Leal," by Lady Nairne, is set to the same melody, with a slight change in the opening bar. Mrs. Hemans and her musical sister, Samuel Lover, Haynes Bayly, and Barry Cornwall, all produced perfect songs. In our own country Stephen C. Foster wrote most of what may be called perfect popular songs. None of his earlier ones are without the three requisites in some degree, and "Old Folks at Home" or "Swanee Ribber" possesses them fully, as a white folks' negro song. A perfect sea song, to be sung by passengers and not by sailors, is "Rocked in the Cradle of the Deep," by Mrs. Emma Willard, to music by Joseph P. Knight. It was written during a voyage from Europe. Of George P. Morris's well-known songs, perhaps that which comes nearest to being perfect is a little one set by an unknown composer, "When other Friends are Round Thee." "Kathleen Mavourneen," words by an Irish lady named Crawford and music by Crouch, is also entitled to the name. Longfellow was not preëminently a writer of singable verse, but his "Stars of the Summer Night," set to music by the late Alfred H. Pease, forms one of the most perfect songs in our language. "All Quiet Along the Potomac To-night," written by Ethel Lynn Beers, and "Rock Me to Sleep, Mother," by Elizabeth Akers Allen, are also perfect. The two last-mentioned songs have been more than usually unfortunate in that they have proved especially attractive to literary kleptomaniacs. The stern moral code,

"It is a sin to steal a pin,
Then how much more a larger thing,"

was not meant to cover so trifling and truant a thing as a song. Of those whose histories have come into this paper, three are of unknown, and six are of disputed, origin. Who can wonder that great songs are few, when the authors are obliged to say, as Mrs. Beers said to me: "'The Poor Picket' has had so many authentic claimants and willing sponsors, that I sometimes question myself whether I did write it that

cool September morning, after reading the stereotyped 'all quiet,' etc., to which was added, in fine type, 'a picket shot,'—and as Mrs. Allen said: "I wrote 'Rock Me to Sleep, Mother,' but I wish from the depths of my heart that I had not. I cannot describe the pain and humiliation the dispute over it has cost me." This form of conscious or unconscious thievery is a "filching of good name," as well as of the product of the brain. It casts, in many cases, a never-to-be-cleared-away doubt upon the word as well as the work of an author; it disheartens from effort, and causes morbid sensitiveness that time and fame cannot cure. Perfect songs will be rare visitors until they are sure of honored recognition.

In thus trying to define the why and wherefore of a song, we cannot fail to see that after all its effect lies among the mysteries of the mind. When Augustus Hare described song as "the tone of feeling," perhaps its subtlest meaning was revealed. It is judged of by the heart more than by the head, therefore it must be first melodious, then responsive, then poetic.

HELEN KENDRICK JOHNSON.